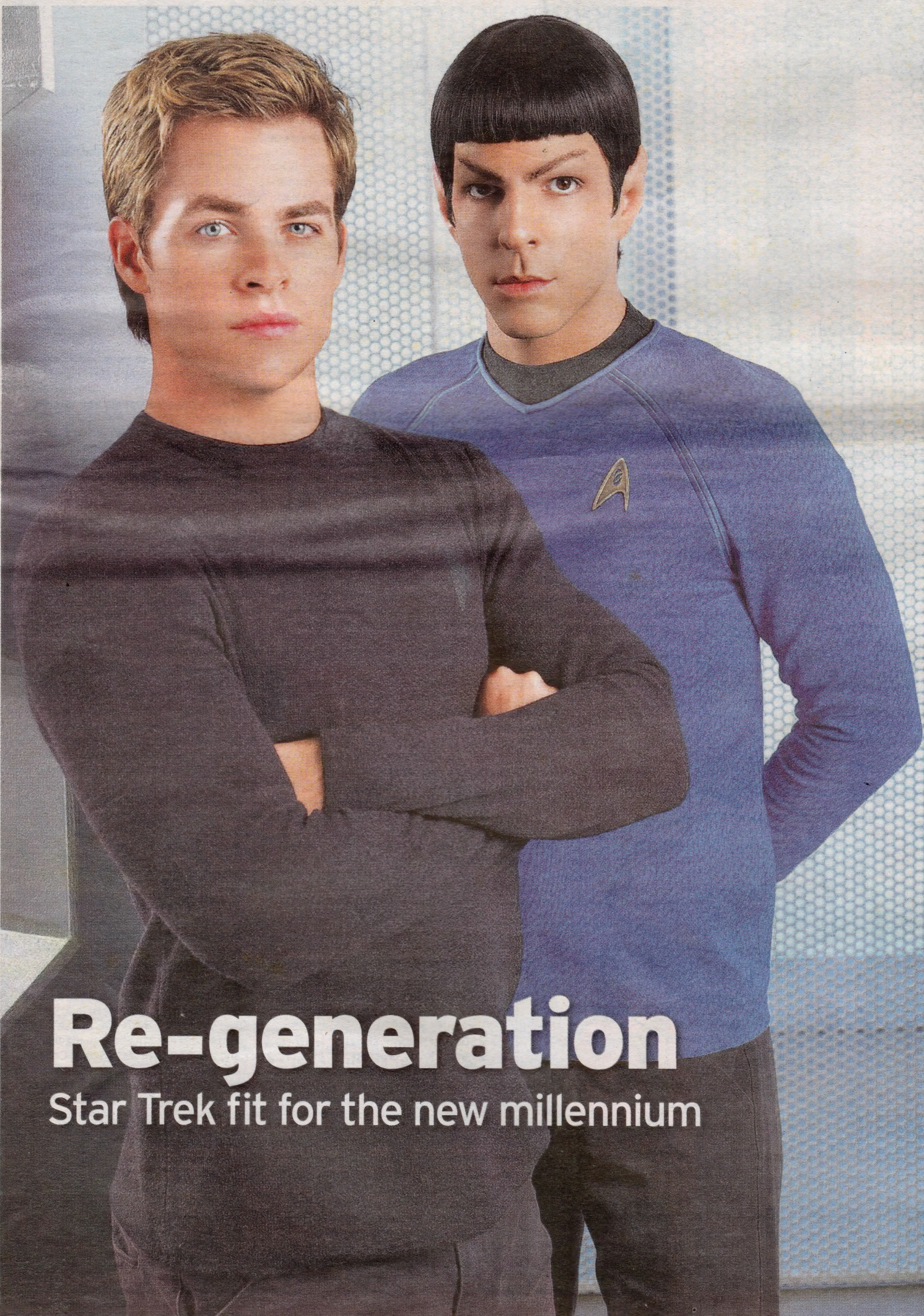




Movies • Music • Arts



Re-generation

Star Trek fit for the new millennium

PROFILE

Aussie filmmaker delivers a classic **P3**



MUSIC

Bertie Blackman steps up a notch **P9**



CONFIDENTIAL

"I wasn't drunk," says Today co-host Karl **P10**



ARTS

Aspiring snappers converge on gallery **P14**



Back to where Trek began



Star Trek (M) ★★★★★

YOU won't have to be a fan of either *Star Trek* television or movie series to enjoy this 21st-century revival that provides a very entertaining first chapter to the *Star Trek* mythology.

Mixing excitement, character study and humour in about equal parts, J.J. Abrams' terrific film — the 11th feature to be spun off from the television series, which was created by the late Gene Roddenberry in 1966 — has been deftly written by Abrams' *Mission: Impossible III* scriptwriters Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman.

Abrams and his crew make lavish use of new-age special effects for some of the most believable outer space action since the *Star Wars* series.

Clearly he has not set out to make a deep movie to rival Kubrick's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* but to entertain audiences of all ages.

While earlier *Star Trek* movies were a mix of the good and the bad, this one, set on the maiden voyage of the Enterprise, succeeds on so many levels it can be recommended to anyone, even those who vowed never to watch any *Star Trek* treatment after experiencing the last film, 2002's *Star Trek: Nemesis*, with the *Next Generation* characters.

Abrams has recruited new faces for his space opera, and they prove to be engaging

company. Future Captain James Tiberius Kirk (the outstanding Chris Pine, a mix of rebel and hero) is a juvenile delinquent in rural Iowa when he's recruited by Captain Pike (Bruce Greenwood) to join the crew of the spaceship Enterprise.

Kirk crosses paths with the half-human Vulcan Spock (Zachary Quinto, from *Heroes*, great in all his scenes) and, courtesy of some time-travelling that gives the original Spock, Leonard Nimoy, entree to the movie, we learn how Kirk and Spock, initially rivals, will become lifelong friends.

Kiwi actor Karl Urban is a welcome addition as the MO "Bones" McCoy, and, in the only bit of casting that might upset — Scots nationals in particular — Englishman comic actor Simon Pegg makes a late appearance as the future chief engineer "Scotty" Scott, and is funny.

Every action movie needs a villain, and this comes in the presence of an almost unrecognisable Eric Bana as the merciless Romulan, Nero. Bana is very impressive.

This is a big-screen movie experience, and Michael Giacchino's booming score has exactly the resonance that an adventure of this scale demands.

Abrams' *Star Trek* is so many light years ahead of the earlier movies that his crew of new faces should earn future instalments in their own right. (122 min)

BIRTH of a legend ... Chris Pine, right, as James Kirk.

Support acts lift familiar haunt

The Ghosts of Girlfriends Past (M) ★★★★★

MATTHEW McConaughey is well practised at playing the cocksure ladies' man, turning *Failure to Launch* and *How to Lose a Guy in Ten Days* into perfectly serviceable romances.

Ghosts of Girlfriends Past is the best of the bunch, a romantic *Christmas Carol* with Matty M. starring as a won't-commit heel of a fashion photographer who goes through supermodels the way banks go through stimulus money. He's so oversexed and over-booked that he has to break up "in bulk" — three women dumped by conference call. But the wedding of his younger brother (Breckin Meyer) drags Connor Mead



back to the family estate, back where he learnt his womanising ways from his late Uncle Wayne, back to the girl he let get away. Jennifer Garner is perfectly cast as Connor's first love, the one he fled because she's on to him. If Mr "Love is a myth!" doesn't get the message, there's the ghost of Uncle Wayne to put him through one haunting night of life lessons. Uncle Wayne, the other coup in the film, is played by Michael Douglas at his lounge lizard best.

The writers who wrote *Four Christmases* concocted this, but director Mark Waters (*Mean Girls*) is the one who keeps it zipping.

The ghosts aren't all that memorable, but *Ghosts* finishes well, and the familiar McConaughey heel-grows-a-heart story arc is engaging. But it's the supporting players, from Garner and Douglas to Anne Archer (cougar mum of the bride), who have the best lines and help make Matthew M. convincing in his journey from devil-may-care to devil who does care. (100 min)

Roger Moore

#1 AUSTRALIAN FILM OF THE YEAR

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★★★★★ **"TRIUMPH!"** JIM SCHEMBRI, THE AGE

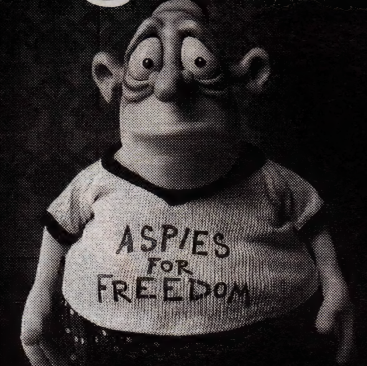
★★★★★ **"The film enthralled and delighted me... extraordinary!"** EVAN WILLIAMS, THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

★★★★★ **"funny and insightful... this film is sublime."** MARGARET POMERANTZ, AT THE MOVIES

"9/10 Wickedly dark and funny... Barry Humphries is at his sardonic best" ROB LOWING, SUN HERALD

PG Mild themes and sexual references

Mary and Max.



In Cinemas Now

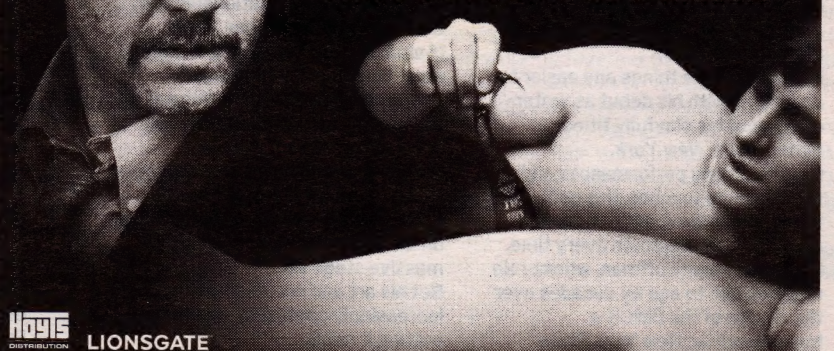
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A brief history of the future

The Original Series (1966-69): The series that started it all was ironically one of the least successful, at the time anyway. The original "five-year mission" was cancelled after just three seasons, but not before giving us such iconic characters as Captain James T. Kirk (William Shatner), Mr Spock (Leonard Nimoy) and Dr Leonard "Bones" McCoy (DeForest Kelley), and immortal lines such as "Scotty, beam us up", "He's dead, Jim" and "I canna change the laws of physics!"

The Next Generation (1987-94): Following in the footsteps of the classic *Star Trek* crew is a daunting prospect, but the *Next Generation* cast – including Captain Jean-Luc Picard (the Shakespearean-trained Patrick Stewart), the android Data (Brent Spiner) and even a Klingon, Worf (Michael Dorn) – managed to pull it off.

Deep Space Nine (1993-99): *Star Trek* took a darker, more political tone in *Deep Space Nine*, which was suspiciously similar to *Babylon 5*, earlier pitched to Paramount by J. Michael Straczynski. This time a black captain – or rather,

commander – Benjamin Sisko (Avery Brooks) was in command of a space station, trying to manage relations between feuding alien races.

Voyager (1995-2001): If *Deep Space Nine* broke new ground with a black leader, *Voyager* was all about sexual equality, with a woman, Captain Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew), occupying the captain's chair on the USS *Voyager*, lost on the other side of the universe.

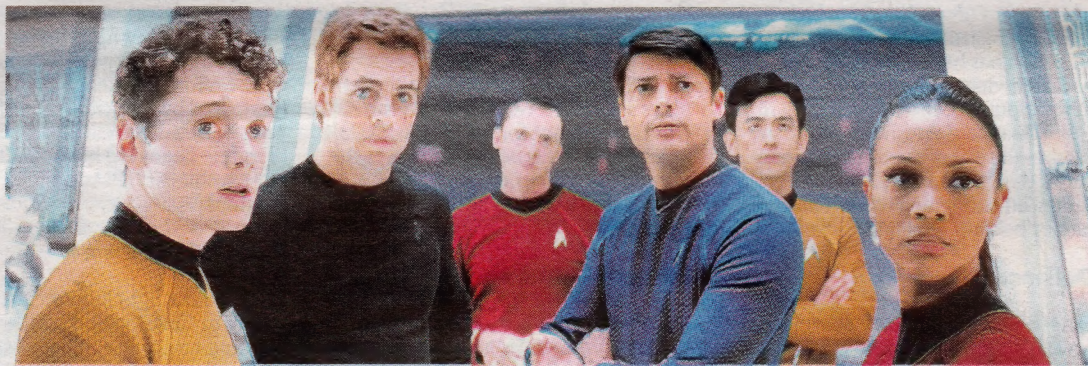
Enterprise (2001-05): Like the new movie, *Enterprise* was an attempt to reinvigorate the franchise by going back in time to events before the original series, showing humanity's first voyages to the stars. It was pitched at a younger audience but was axed after four seasons.

The movies: The axing of *Enterprise* and a lukewarm reception for 2002's big-screen outing *Nemesis* ushered in a "dark time" for *Star Trek*, and the new movie is the first in seven years. It comes 30 years after the original *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. There have been six films featuring the original crew and four featuring the *Next Generation* crew. Generally, the even-numbered movies have been the best, but J.J. Abrams' new effort, the 11th, is out to break that hoodoo.

John O'Brien

A Star Trek for Generation Next

The Starship Enterprise is out to recruit a new generation of Trekkies, writes **Alice Wasley**



THINK *Star Trek* is for geeks who like to don pointy ears and make strange hand signals, or just a fond memory for the kids of the 1960s? You are exactly the type of person director J.J. Abrams is targeting with his contribution to the franchise.

"I wasn't as worried about offending (the fans)," says Abrams, who was not a Trekkie himself before he made *Star Trek*.

"I worried more about not interesting other people. I felt we would get the fans — it was the people who didn't really have a sense of *Star Trek* that I was hoping would have a good time."

The new offering is the 11th *Star Trek* feature film and is based on Gene Roddenberry's original '60s television series, which starred William Shatner as Captain Kirk and Leonard Nimoy as Dr Spock.

Nimoy has a small role in the new film, which Abrams describes as a huge thing and something he hopes will help get it over the line with *Star Trek* purists.

The remainder of the cast is relatively unknown, apart from Eric Bana who is almost unrecognisable as the Romulan villain Nero.

Chris Pine steps into the role of Captain Kirk, and Zachary Quinto, who some people will recognise as Sylar from the television series *Heroes*, plays Dr Spock.

"I think for Chris and Zach it's so exciting," Bana says.

"The overwhelming thing I felt when I read (the script) is that whoever plays Kirk and Spock are just going to be megastars."

"I just said to my wife, 'Whoever are playing Kirk and Spock have the greatest introductory roles I've ever read.'"

Abrams, co-creator of the television show *Lost*, admits he chose a low-profile cast for his big-budget film (estimated to have cost more than \$US150 million) because he felt a

star would overshadow it.

"This was what was so crazy about this movie. It was a substantial budget and there was no Tom Cruise-level movie star," Abrams says. "But the truth is, once you start having actors who are that well known in these parts, the distraction of their pre-existing movies is not worth the enormous cost. To me the fun is discovering actors who you believe are these people."

Pine and Quinto know well they have had a lucky break.

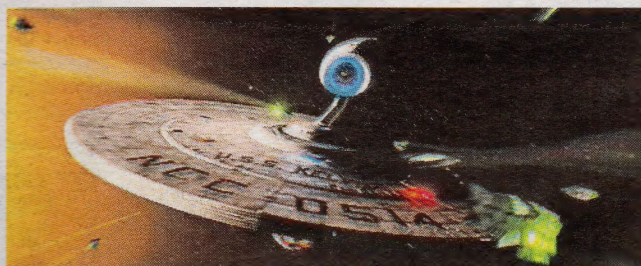
During this interview, Pine's sister Katherine and Quinto's brother Joe hover in the background taking photographs.

Like Abrams, Quinto and Pine were not *Star Trek* fans before being involved in the film.

"I was aware of it, certainly, and I'd been exposed to it minimally as a kid, but I wasn't a fanatic by any means," Quinto says. "We both grew up in the *Star Wars* generation so I remember that being my primary experience. But I do remember always being really interested in this weird guy with pointy ears whenever I watched it."

Pine probably had the biggest challenge in shaking off the memory of Shatner as Captain Kirk and making the role his own.

"Much like Zach, I was more of a *Star Wars* kid so upon getting it I had to do my due diligence and see what it was all about," Pine says. "I started watching (the first season of) the original show and was getting into it and then realised I was doing myself more of an injustice than I was helping myself out. Because what Mr Shatner did



was so specific and unique I realised, given my own kind of OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) and perfectionism, that I would inevitably try for an impersonation rather than original incarnation of the character."

Quinto says Pine does such a phenomenal job of really embodying it for himself but says he did pick up on shades of Shatner in his portrayal.

"I think there are at least three moments where he just gives the slightest little nod to Shatner," Quinto says.

"There's the moment at the end where he sits in the chair with his legs crossed and it's like, 'Who would do that?'. It's such a Shatner thing. It's a testament to the craft with which he made this happen. I think it's a great balance."

Pine concedes Shatner's sense of humour and his physicality are two aspects he tried to inject into the role.

"He brings an unbelievable amount of humour to the role and I think people have not given him the credit — they think the show is campy and the effects are lame and he overdoes it and in fact I think what he's doing in *Trek*, is what you see later on in *Boston Legal*, is that he's tremendously funny," he says.

Star Trek tells the story of how James T. Kirk becomes Captain Kirk, commander of the Starship Enterprise.



I feel like the space race thing was the least of its meaning

ACROSS the universe ... the latest crew of the starship Enterprise; main picture, director J.J. Abrams.

Picture: Getty Images

"When we first started, I didn't know things like Spock was half-human and I was always wondering, Why do I care about Kirk? What's his back story?" Abrams says. "The idea that we got to see how this aimless kid became captain — they were the things I felt transcended a TV series I had never been interested in and became a story I was excited to see."

The original television series was created at a time when the world was focused on the space race. Forty years on, when space exploration is less of a novelty, Abrams says he felt it was time to explore the broader themes of the show.

"I feel like the space race thing was the least of its meaning," he says. "What made it interesting was it was written at a time when there was obviously a lot of fear and suspicion politically. Racially the show was a very optimistic one and showed people hundreds of years from now not only having survived but actually collaborating and working together inter-culturally, inter-racially (and between species). That alone, I thought, was a pretty interesting idea."

"It's clearly fantasy but at least it's something that provides us, I think, with a sense of hope and optimism that there's a future in which we not only survive but thrive."

Star Trek opens today. >> Win tickets P46

